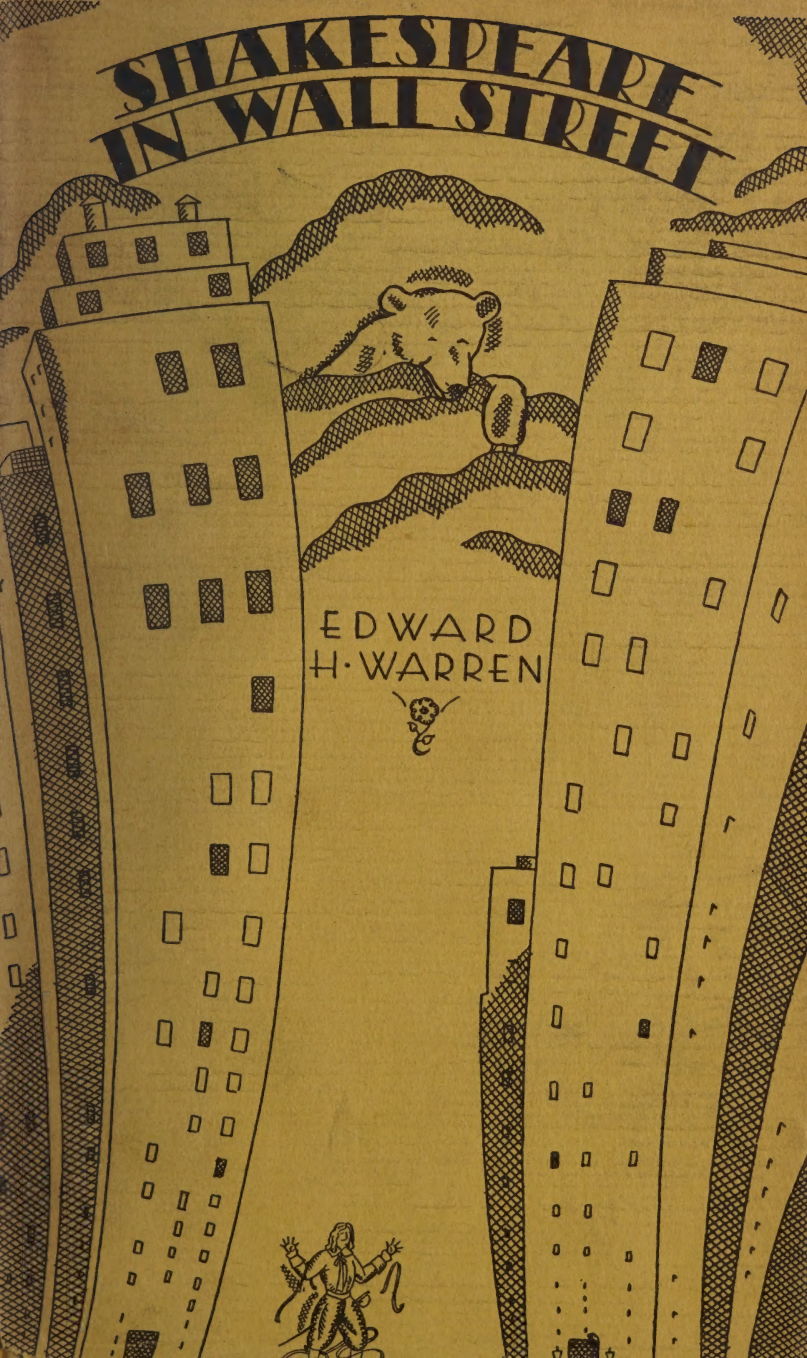
SHAKESPEARE IN WALL STREET



EDWARD H. WARREN

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EDWARD H. WARREN

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Shakespeare in Wall Street

SHAKESPEARE IN WALL STREET

BY
EDWARD H. WARREN

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TO
ALL THE BULLS
MAY THEIR COURAGE NEVER WILT!

Shakespeare in Wall Street

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

Shakespeare

Mrs. Shakespeare

Shakespeare's sons

Hamlet, a bond salesman
Macbeth, a timid bull
Falstaff, an anti-prohibitionist

Lady Macbeth, always bullish

Banquo

Bardolph, valet to *Falstaff*

Polonius, secretary to *Shakespeare*

Shylock, a stock-broker

Three Traders

Three Witches

Hecate

Shakespeare in Wall Street

* *
*

ACT I

Scene I

Near a Blast Furnace in New Jersey

Enter three Witches

First Witch. The sky is blue, the weather fair,
And business prospers everywhere.
Second Witch. I'm looking here, and looking there,
I do not find a prosperous bear.
Third Witch. There is a Turn to every fate.
Who buys them now, buys far too late.
First Witch. That's not what I heard.
Second Witch. What did you hear?
First Witch. What all the speculators say:
The market wings its upward way,
That Radio will sell more high
Than eagle's flight across the sky.
Third Witch. There'll be an end to all this winning;
The bears will play the final inning.
First Witch. When Radio is thirty-two
What the Hell will people do?
Third Witch. Come, sisters, we shall meet again

When prices fall like showers of rain.
All. When the market's set to crack,
To this foul spot we'll all come back.

(*Exeunt.*,

Scene II

New York. The Library of Shakespeare's House

Shakespeare and Mrs. Shakespeare

Shakespeare. The bitter toil of years is mine, yet I am poor.
My neighbors all are rich. The market's rising star
Hath clearly shown the road to easy fortune's grasp,
But I, consummate ass, have stumbled through the dark.
Now I am weary, pushing on and on my impecunious pen.
I'll quit and now. There is no stroke of pen can touch
A market stroke of luck. And still there's time.
The bullish tide still rolls, why should it end?
There is no end to dreams. Together with the world I'll ride
The glory while it lasts.
Mrs. Shakespeare. Such stuff as this from you, my lord, seems strange.
Shakespeare. Strange it may be, but not more strange
Than you should cry for hats and clothes

I cannot buy. You'll get them now, or else
go broke!

Mrs. Shakespeare. 'Tis sleep you need, my
lord; the morning's cold appraisal
Will give you second thought.

Shakespeare. Not I. My dumbest years are
done.

Mrs. Shakespeare. It seems they just begin.

Shakespeare. The market is the nation's fever,
deep-seated in its blood.
Now who am I to be so strong I can escape the
germ?
Fond mothers flock the brokers' rooms, and
grandma holds a chair.
Then soon will come the time when babes do
cry for stocks.
Wouldst have it said that I was last? It shall
not be.
The die is cast, the fun begins. Lead on, you
bulls,
And strong be he who first shall scent a bear.

(*Curtain*)

Scene III

New York. Macbeth's Apartment on
Park Avenue

Enter Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth. Did you buy Chrysler, as I
asked?

Macbeth. No. I thought better of it.

Lady Macbeth. Did you buy Auburn, then?
Macbeth. I dared not.
Lady Macbeth. What have you done?
Macbeth. I bought a hundred Overland.
Lady Macbeth. O perfect ass! There's not a profit in a thousand Overland to buy the baby shoes.
Macbeth. But Overland is safe.
Lady Macbeth. Safe! Who wishes to be safe?
Better be Perfection's fool than some one medium done.
Macbeth. There are many in Overland.
Lady Macbeth. I know of one who has forsworn to shave
Till Overland shall rise. Now are his whiskers grown
Far longer than a mermaid's hair. Forever they will grow!
Macbeth. My broker recommends.
Lady Macbeth. Who cares? Give me a stock with a rocket's rush,
A shooter for the stars.
Macbeth. Too risky that.
Lady Macbeth. Had you but shown the coward temper of your mind
When you did ask my hand in marriage,
Do you suppose that now you'd call me wife?
My great mistake! Alas! The fervent ardor of your suit
Swept through me like a prairie fire, unhinged my common sense,

And made me fail to see the weak and watered soul of you
Who calls himself a man; and yet who dares to say,
I do not dare to take a chance.
This life is filled with people pale and pallid,
Content to graze on life's prosaic way, as pastured cows
Do munch and munch their everlasting cud.
The world has many tails,
And I do fear that you are one, to follow on behind,
To droop with woe, to wag again, to droop, impotent silly tail,
A signpost on the desert road to nowhere.
Macbeth. I'll take the plunge. It may be deep,
But better far than face the torment of your nagging.
Lady Macbeth. Good news! Now watch the profits roll!
We'll break out such a limousine, my boy,
'Twill star the streets, cause passers-by to stand and gape,
Pop-eyed with its wonder.
Macbeth. But if we lose?
Lady Macbeth. Why, then, we lose. What matter's it?
We walk, and we have walked before.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT II

Scene I

New York. The Top of the Singer Building

Hamlet, looking out over New York

Hamlet. Here on this lofty tower I feel once more
The world's romance far out beyond the smoky air
To the distant shore of dreams. Here in this reach of space
My spirit lifts, and for the moment dares regain
The spice and charm of life, so rudely lost
When I from college plucked, by quick financial need,
Was forced to knock the rich man's door
And beg him buy a bond.
O what a weary world, and what a job is mine!
Had I but half a lion's nerve, I'd jump,
But I do fear the drop and squash
Upon the pavement far below. That gives me pause,
And makes me bear my task accursed of selling bonds.
A million bonds to sell, and none to buy!
When I parade my wares, why, even widows laugh,

And point their broker's balance sheet to show
The brilliance of their stocks.
Would that I had never known the sidewalks
of New York,
That I might live again bright college years at
Yale,
My philosophic nights, and days of Kelly pool.
There was a glamour then, a joy I have forgot,
In bonds, bonds, bonds, filthy unsalable bonds!
Nor am I fitted with a salesman's gall,
And day of bonds is done. Far down the can-
yoned street
The muffled clocks strike ten. The Stock Ex-
change moves on,
Its stocks renew their climb, to reach the skies,
To touch the sun, perhaps. And yet the sun
shines short
In Wall Street's cleft, its many-windowed walls
are dark.
The gambler makes his play, but none can read
reflected there
What way the spots will roll.
If to-day might be to-morrow, the crystal ball
reveal
The future trend of ups and downs, why, then
we'd know
Whether to go long or short, the eternal ques-
tion never answered yet,
And never will but by the hand of chance.

(*Curtain*)

Scene II

New York. Shakespeare's Study

Enter Shakespeare and Polonius

Shakespeare. What news, Polonius?

Polonius. The brokers' loans increase.

Shakespeare. What? Again? Great gods, it cannot be!

Polonius. The figures here do state. Look, my lord.

Shakespeare. It cannot be, but still it is.
My eyes do read, yet scarce believe.
Sound reason tells, when stocks are down,
The loans should not be up.
This strange benighted paradox doth fuddle up my brain.

Polonius. Not yours alone, my lord.

Shakespeare. The world is thinking far too much of these damned brokers' loans.
Greater than the wide world's work, their headline stars the page
A record high, the nation gasps, the timid traders quake,
Strong statisticians rush to print the country's gone to Hell.

Polonius. They'll never see the day, but still there's danger in the wind.

(*Enter Lady Macbeth*)

Shakespeare. I know no poison in the loans,
Now why should these things be?

Lady Macbeth. You ask him why? Go to, and ask the Sphinx.
There's none alive can answer. These loans
Will drive me mad, as they have done Macbeth.
Shakespeare. What is't you say?
Lady Macbeth. Not wholly mad, perhaps, but at the rate he goes,
'Twill not be long. These sad statistics have o'ercome
What feeble brain he had. He's balmy in the bean.
Polonius. What? From thinking on the loans?
Lady Macbeth. Forever that, each waking hour and more,
'Tis even through the night,
The mutters of his sleep repeat the total brokers' loans.
Polonius. Such constant thinking would wear away
The mind of genius even.
Lady Macbeth. And who would call my husband that
Is duller than a fool.
Shakespeare. He lacks perspective. Come, take the man abroad,
Where is no end to loans and loans, yet no one cares
A continental damn. That's what he needs.
The change will cure him quick.
Lady Macbeth. How shall we go? As stowaways?

Shakespeare. Take money from the bank.
Take principal.
In this essential cause, what matters which you
take?
Lady Macbeth. There's nothing in the bank.
The all we have
Our broker holds, with iron in his clutch.
He'll not let loose, nor is content with what he
has;
The villain calls for more.
Shakespeare. So that is why you came.
Lady Macbeth. Exactly that.
Shakespeare. Then are you not ashamed to
come to me?
Lady Macbeth. Why so? You are my husband's
father.
Shakespeare. You are the cause of this.
Without your whisper in his ear, he never
would have sold
His prosperous oyster farms to General Foods,
And sunk substantial fortune in the market's
chance,
For what? To exercise your greed for more,
When then you had enough.
Lady Macbeth. I am at fault, but I am human
like the rest.
Shakespeare. Too true!
Lady Macbeth. Who could resist the market's
thrall? Know you one?
Unless it be the deaf, the dumb, and blind.
Shakespeare. I know of none. I could not.

Lady Macbeth. You, of all the world!
And yet you censure me.
Shakespeare. I shall not. My censure is withdrawn.
Lady Macbeth. Accept my thanks.
Shakespeare. How could you lose? The market's close to top,
It rather seems not you, your broker is the fool.
Lady Macbeth. Blame not my broker's foul advice, but mine.
I told Macbeth the motor stocks would rise.
Shakespeare. The motor stocks! Immortal gods!
Lie down my tongue, and do not speak,
I dare not be so harsh.
Lady Macbeth. Speak out!
Shakespeare. Why, babes could see the motor stocks would crash.
Inflated like balloons they stood, far out beyond the pack,
For bears to single out, fat targets in their drive.
Lady Macbeth. No more than others were.
Shakespeare. Not so, you know it. Financial experts spread abroad
The saturation point is reached. Beware the motors' fall!
Lady Macbeth. So often heard, I listened not at all.
The cry was false ten years ago.
It will be ten years hence.
Shakespeare. But it has proven true.

Lady Macbeth. A technical reaction, that is all.

Shakespeare. You should have bought in power and gas.

Lady Macbeth. Why bring that up? I did not.

Shakespeare. It's not too late to shift.

Lady Macbeth. If I do shift, wilt carry my account?

Shakespeare. I will; there is no chance in that.
Utilities will rise and rise and rise and rise.

(*Enter Falstaff*)

Falstaff. Now did I hear some mention of a rise?
But give me back the price I paid, then you can have them all.

Shakespeare. May God have mercy! You, too?

Falstaff. I'm loaded to the ears.

Lady Macbeth. With what, utilities?

Falstaff. And they are twice too much.

Shakespeare. Too little, rather. The writing on the wall is clear.
The nation grows on power, electric is the home.

Falstaff. The ancient fireside long is dead, the housewife works no more.

Lady Macbeth. Dream on, there'll be electric babies yet.

Falstaff. A rotten scheme, but if they bring my money back,
I sacrifice the cause.

(*Curtain.*)

ACT III

Scene I

Macbeth's Apartment in New York

Macbeth and Lady Macbeth

Macbeth. Grown weary of the market strain
The courage from my faltering heart is oozing
bit by bit.
How gladly would I sell! I cannot. This
dreadful business will go on,
There's no escape! When winter comes and
folds the land in snow,
The shaggy forest bears will seek their lairs
under ground;
Strange irony of fate, the Wall Street bears
will still parade,
To terrorize my nerves, already frayed from
watching tape unroll
Disaster to the stocks I hold, while up the
market moves.
To lose, when all the world has lost, is bitter
dreg enough;
To lose and lose, when wins the world, is
double star of woe.
But had I vision of the path they trod, I'd be a
millionaire.

Lady Macbeth. So say we all! Our fretful
hours of might have been

Do clog the forward way to fortune and success.
But yesterday is yesterday, it never can be more.
To-morrow is another day. It may be ours, who knows!

Macbeth. The shadows by the wall take shape
In multitudes of bears to drive me mad. Uneasy is my sleep.
Wakeful through the night's long hours, I dread the morning news.
Calamity's rumor on the wind foreruns the storm
I know must break to topple o'er the pyramid of stocks,
Grown tall beyond the bounds of sense, and will destroy,
As surely as before, the dream of man, built weakly in the air,
On slender threads of hope, too fragile far to hold.

Lady Macbeth. Man's dream, that you now hold to scorn,
Has conquered worlds, and still has far to go.
The fabric that you hold so weak is built of solid stuff.
Beyond your poor imagining, the nation grows, and fast.
Brilliant is the future's promise, unmistakable and clear to wise men,
Yet dim to one whose nose has clouded up his sight.

Macbeth. What noise is that?

Lady Macbeth. What noise, my lord? You are unnerved.

Some newsboy cries his 'Extra' down the street.

Macbeth. Methought I heard a voice cry, 'The brokers' loans are up.'

Lady Macbeth. Do not disturb yourself, my lord.

I heard his cry, 'Another murder in Chicago.'

(*Curtain.*)

Scene II

Falstaff's Apartment

The Bedroom, Falstaff in Bed

Enter Bardolph

Bardolph. Good-morning, my lord.

Falstaff. 'Twere better had you said good-night.

Bardolph. You look not well.

Falstaff. Wow, what a head have I!
The cobwebs in my brain do stop my ears.
My tongue, last night a wagging piece of wit,
Recumbent lies, a sodden pad of cotton waste
To swell the bitter desert of my mouth.

Bardolph. I have always said, my lord, you had better stick to gin.

Falstaff. Gin, you fool! 'Twas gin hath made me thus.

Bardolph. Far too strong, I fear.

Falstaff. I will forswear this drinking from a flask.

Too treacherous that by far!
Such devil power is hid in Prohibition's flask
If poured on Tutankhámen's antique tomb, 'twould bring
The distant dead to wake, break through their mummy wraps,
Dissolve their centuries of death, to stride the world, alive.
Bardolph. As I have said, my lord, none but a camel
Can drink a gallon's fill, and none but an owl is made
To wander all the night.
Falstaff. Then, Bardolph, I should have been an owl.
I long for the twilight hour, I grow with the rising moon.
When lights are out, and the moon has set, my twinkle lives
To answer the midnight stars. Then I am I, Falstaff,
The inner man revealed, stripped clear of inhibition's stuff,
Forgetful of mankind's prepared opinion. Dictator of the world asleep,
I hold a million shares.
Too brief the hour! The morning star winks out,
And with the star the better part of me.
Bardolph. So sad, my lord!
Falstaff. Have at me, Bardolph. Make havoc with your play

Of dull ironic jest. I am too weak for answer.

Bardolph. Not irony, but truth, my lord.

Falstaff. Come, my pretty, let her loose!
Call me what you will, clodpole, ass, and purple goat!
Say anything you like, 'twill not be half I feel.

Bardolph. A cup of coffee and an egg will put you right, my lord.

Falstaff. An egg, a yellow, woozy egg! I cannot face the beast.

Bardolph. A cup of coffee, then.

Falstaff. Begone! And have a double care lest you disturb me.
The bears make whoopee with my bank account. Watch out!
One move that's false, and you are done.

(*Curtain*)

Scene III

The Blast Furnaces

Enter the Witches

First Witch. Where hast thou been, sister?

Second Witch. Peeking in the brokers' books, counting margins.

First Witch. How have you found them?

Second Witch. I found them margined well.

Third Witch. Well, but not too well.

First Witch. What climbs to Heaven now
Some day will fall to Hell.

Third Witch. Such horrid news I hold

I am on fire with joy. Come closer, sisters,
That I may breathe the hellish word
Will send iced shivers down your spines.
All. Tell, tell! Suspense will make us numb!
Third Witch. The Federal Reserve in secret conclave ponders
Means to cure the nation's cloudy state o'ercast
By stormy speculation. To-morrow morning's news proclaims
The fury of their warning. Such dismal stuff will shake
The Wall Street world to marrow of its gambling bones;
Will make the poor man more than poor, the bloated rich disgorge
Their profits piled, their fortunes drop like shooting stars.
Second Witch. Say Au Revoir to bulls; the gaunt and hungry bears
Have finished with the long, lean years. At last, at last!
All. At last, at last, a man without a margin!
First Witch. To-morrow is a day of days. I cannot wait,
I burst within, to keep the news I hold.
Second Witch. The little gamblers are in bed, asleep,
Their dreams content.
Third Witch. O, to ride the murmur of the night wind,

To breathe the ghastly news in every nook, in every sleeping ear,
Awake the world to know disaster stalks. What utter joy!

(*Enter Hecate, dragging a cauldron*)

All. What have you in the pot?
Hecate. One of the great American public.
First Witch. Is he cooked?
Hecate. Not yet, but soon he will be.
All. Prepare the brew, and cook the goose.
First Witch. Throw in the horns of bulls, and mix
The entrails of a margin speculator mangled.
Second Witch. Pour in the brains of fools, and mix
Unwary feet, the optimist's fond wish,
The smiles that were, the last of hope,
And all that was, and never will.
Third Witch. Pour and pour and pour, till all the cauldron's filled,
Then kindle fast the flame with paper profits heaped,
Till up they go, in clouds of murky smoke.
Hecate. Hold still, you hags! Here comes a likely sheep,
With wool grown ripe for fleecing.

(*Enter Macbeth and Banquo*)

All. A tip, a tip! Now who will give
A farthing for a tip?

Macbeth. That will I. A golden eagle even.

First Witch. Beware the tips, Macbeth,
That turn to be but whispers of despair.

Banquo. That much is clear, but tells us nothing.

Macbeth. Speak out, you hags!
Unroll the future from your tongue
And I will pay you rich.

Second Witch. The top is near, Macbeth, the bottom far away.

Macbeth. What is't you mean?

Third Witch. Sell at the top, buy at the bottom.
Take that path, Macbeth, then are you sure to win. (*The witches vanish*)

Macbeth. Now any ass could tell me that!

Banquo. Not so, my lord,
There is a reading in the lines
That makes me think 'tis time to duck.

Macbeth. What say you?

Banquo. You heard as well as I,
The top is near, they said. Methinks I'll sell
The paltry shares I hold before it is too late.

Macbeth. Your guess, good Banquo, strikes the nail!
From this prophetic fog the answer comes so clear
That I am dumb I could not see. The hour has come
To sell, yet I dare not. For I do fear my wife.

Her words do echo in my brain, 'Stand fast, Macbeth,
This rise has just begun.'
Banquo. Stuff cotton in your ears,
Let not your listening impede your firm resolve to sell.
Macbeth. You do not know my wife.
If I do sell the stocks I hold, and after comes a rise,
My home were such a fury then, that Hell itself seems mild!
Banquo. Are you not a man?
Macbeth. I know not sometimes. Make haste and sell your stocks,
I follow on in thought.

(*Curtain*)

ACT IV

Scene I

Falstaff's Apartment in New York

Falstaff, Hamlet, and Lady Macbeth

Lady Macbeth. The bond business is the bunk. Get out!

Falstaff. I told you, Hamlet, long ago. Play stocks.

Hamlet. No stock ever has flown so high but some colossal ass
Would buy it at the top.

Falstaff. Buy Bond and Share and Foreign Power.

Lady Macbeth. Buy Auburn Motor Car. Two hundred points is mild.

Hamlet. My country has a love for gold I do not share,
Nor can I face the turmoil and the bitter strife
That men profess to hate, yet, deep within their hearts, adore.
But never I! For I am one, built hermit-like
To live and think apart, unravel from my cloudy mind
Strange riddle of life's perplexity, that has no answer,
But is sport withal, to test ingenious cunning of the brain.

Lady Macbeth. Thou art as cuckoo as the bird
That peeps from out the clock.
Falstaff. There's nothing wrong with him
But too much damned philosophy. The trouble
with these thinkers is
An overdose of thought. To think and think
without a whit of common sense,
What profits it? Our brother here has muddled
up his thinking-piece
Until he knows not bulls from bears. His
thoughts, confused,
Like peas in pods do wabble to and fro.
Lady Macbeth. The man's miscast in selling
bonds. The Senate is his rôle.
Hamlet. Had I but money of my own, no
hand could hold me here.
Falstaff. Tell me, bird! Now where wouldst
wander?
Hamlet. Far to a Southern shore, where warm
winds blow;
Some distant land from life apart, no sound but
wind and sea.
Falstaff. And what do there, you duffer
head?
Make faces at the moon?
Hamlet. I've had too much of doing.
This constant push drives on beyond me. I
cannot hold the pace.
Lady Macbeth. How strange!
New York hath gathered up my heart, strong
holds me in its thrill.

The city's many millioned voice is dear, is parcel of my life.
The lights of Broadway are my eyes: I should be blind without.
Hamlet. Then you can have it all. My share is yours, and free.
Lady Macbeth. What think you, Falstaff?
A little liquor, very strong, would stir this Hamlet's gullet
To speak some normal sense?
Falstaff. The gin's not mixed.
Lady Macbeth. Then mix it, fool!
The camel's virtue is not mine. I rattle in my throat.
Falstaff. I fear this Hamlet.
You know the man, he's worse when drunk.
His vaporings are mild, but gentle stuff, until he has a drink,
Then does he ooze from all his pores such damned philosophy
Compared to him old Socrates is dumb.
Lady Macbeth. A pity that, but can't be helped.
Some artificial aid my being craves; my nerves are twittered with the fear
The market opens down so low that snakes will sit on top.
Some villain whispers in my ear, the discount rate is raised.
Falstaff. Dost know that?
Or is it but a fair excuse to make the evening wild?

Lady Macbeth. The source whence comes the news too often has been right.

Falstaff. Then Hell prepares!
I'll set the stage before. The dawn's not yet,
The night still lives, and what a night!
Play on, play fast, until the waking cock shall crow
How dismal is the morn.

Lady Macbeth. You could not hit more apt my present mood. Lead on!

Falstaff. Come on, you hermit fool. Before I'm done I'll make you yet
A roaring night-club hound. (*Exeunt.*)

Scene II

The Blast Furnace

Enter three Witches

First Witch. The Reserve did strike a warning bell.
The note was clear, yet, strange to tell,
The market failed to go to Hell.

Second Witch. I've stirred and stirred a pot of trouble.
It will not boil, nor will it bubble.

Third Witch. You ninny! Know you not the reason why!
The potion sleeps by stirring, nor will it boil
Until the mixture's ripe. And 'tis not yet.

First Witch. Stand off and wait. The time will come.

(*Enter Hecate, with a bird on her shoulder*)

The Witches. What have you there, a woodpecker?

Hecate. No woodpecker this. A fine young raven.

First Witch. Prophet of evil from a distant land.

Hecate. Not this bird. Straight from Babson Park.

First Witch. What, a Puritan bird!

Second Witch. What else? Hast ever seen a look more black?

Third Witch. What ails you, bird? Dost think the market too extravagant?

The Raven. The market's sick. I think it well
To sell and sell and sell and sell.

First Witch. If that's your cue, old bird, pipe down!
We've heard that stuff before.

Second Witch. Old stuff, it smells.

Third Witch. Old? Antique, you mean.

First Witch. I hear the horse's laugh,
The donkey's hee-haw in the fields.

Second Witch. Be silent, bird; some more like that
And mules will crack their lips.

Third Witch. Why have you brought this bird?
Dost think this buoyant land will heed such dismal croaking?

Hecate. It will, and now's the hour!

First Witch. Stand still, my blackened heart!
If this be true, then Santa Claus is dead.
Second Witch. Dead as the desert dust.
Third Witch. Buy Woolworth, sisters.
There'll be treasure in a ten-cent piece.
First Witch. If this be true, I'll drive the buzzards from the bulls.
This bird shall feed alone.
The Raven. The market now is out of joint.
'Twill dribble, dribble, point by point,
Down and down, till dismal day
When eighty points have fled away.
Hecate. Hear! Hear!
The Witches. We hear, but dare not heed.
There's something whispers in our ear
This bird's been wrong before.

(*Exeunt.*)

Scene III

Shylock's Office on Broadway

Shylock and three Traders

Shylock. Well, gentlemen, bullish as ever?
First Trader. No. Put me down as bearish.
Second Trader. For shame! A bear to-day, and yesterday a bull!
Has all your courage oozed that you do cast aside your horns
And now forsake the cause? No man is man who falls in step
With cowards' flying feet.

Third Trader. Do not blame him. The herd has turned,
And he, like any worthy sheep, must follow on.
Second Trader. The Trans-Lux screen has glued his eyes. He cannot see beyond.
First Trader. The Wall Street mind is never fixed, but, lightning like, its temper shifts
To fit the ticker's gauge.
Third Trader. A broad outlook, that!
First Trader. 'Tis yours, you fool!
Second Trader. And mine, I do admit.
Shylock. As prices go, so goes the Street.

(*Enter Falstaff*)

Falstaff. How, now, you fat commission hound!
What think you of the market?
Shylock. The tone was better at the close.
Falstaff. The tone? What mean you by the tone?
Never was a broker yet who did not speak as if he thought
The market were a music piece. And so it is,
For goats to play on. Come on, speak out!
What is't you think, if anything? If not,
For mercy hold your peace.
Shylock. My opinion is, the market opens up.
Falstaff. I thank you much for that.
This brokers' damned equivocating would gall the patience of a duck,

And ducks are patient beasts

(*Clerk hands Shylock a wire*)

Shylock. I am surprised at this.

Falstaff. I am surprised at nothing. The news is bad, I'll wager.

Come, read it out.

Shylock. 'Sellers all around the floor.'

Falstaff. There they go again! Some more of this, and I shall be as naked as a babe.

(*Enter Hamlet*)

Hamlet. Bonds for widows, bonds for grandmothers.

Bonds for tottering trustees, bonds for damned fools.

Bonds, bonds, beautiful bonds! Gilt-edged bonds!

Now who will buy a bond?

Falstaff. Who could if he would? Not I.

Shylock (*looking at the ticker*). The opening is off, quite off.

Falstaff. And so I might have known, when first I heard you say

The opening would be up. Another rotten guess, friend Shylock,

Nor will it be the last.

First Trader. There's none can guess.

Second Trader. Morgan and Rockefeller, they know.

Third Trader. And Mellon, too; he knows.

First Trader. No more than you or I. The cards are spread too wide

For one man's knowing. He is a fool who tries.

Falstaff. A worse than fool, an utter nincompoop.

First Trader. Long, short, short, long! Which to be or both?

Once right to-day, thrice wrong to-morrow.
What profits that, and yet we do not quit!

Falstaff. Nor will, until we're broke. Methinks it won't be long.

(*Shylock hands Falstaff a paper*)

So that's it, more margin!
Let loose the leech who's written that, and if he cling to me
I will unseat the lizard from his brains, and pull his tonsils off.

Shylock. Be calm! Dost think we make this call for sport?
We must protect ourselves.

Falstaff. Indeed! 'Twas you, none other, who is responsible for this.

Shylock. How so?

Falstaff. Was it not you who said,
To buy and buy and buy. The market's on the wing, climb on?
I climbed, you held the ladder's rung. Now get me out.

The Traders. A cheer for Falstaff, noble soul!
He speaks from out our hearts. We did not dare.
Come, Shylock, get us out. Once we are even on the books,
Our dust will smoke the world.

Shylock. A common statement that,
And like the most, without a word of truth.
I'll wait until eleven. If margin's not forthcoming then,
I sell. I have no other choice.
Falstaff. Eleven, is it? There's magic in the time.
The hour the Armistice was signed. Propitious hour!
Mayhap some kindly relative of mine will pass this life
And leave his wherewithal to me.
Shylock. I doubt it much.
Falstaff. And so do I. O Shylock, let me dream,
While dreams are good. To spur them on, it might be well
To take a little drink.
Traders. So say we all!

(*Exeunt.*)

Scene IV

Shakespeare's Home. The Library

Enter Shakespeare and Polonius

Shakespeare. Have you heard from Falstaff?
Polonius. He has just telephoned.
Shakespeare. Has he lost everything, or are there rags to save?
Polonius. My lord, I do suspect.
Shakespeare. Out with it, you ninny-nanny!

Your hesitation waltz of thought doth get my goat.
Hast ever had an opinion?

Polonius. I think, my lord, he's broke.

Shakespeare. Well, there's one in the family gone. Count him out.

Polonius. Let not your courage wilt, my lord.
There's hope in this idea to pool our resources.

Shakespeare. I doubt we raise enough to buy canaries meals.

Polonius. Macbeth has also telephoned.

Shakespeare. Will he be here?

Polonius. He will, but, begging your pardon, my lord,
I think no good will come of it.

Shakespeare. I never thought so. Still, had he an opinion?

Polonius. He said, referring to Lady Macbeth's jewelry, it was already hocked.
Also, if I would wire the Federal Reserve, they might think of something.

Shakespeare. Think of something?

Polonius. He said, they thought so much on the way up,
They might, mayhap, think of something on the way down.

Shakespeare. At times like this such foolery is bitter stuff.
It seems that he's gone, too. Count him out.
There's only Hamlet left.

Polonius. Now, there you've hit the mainstay of our hope.

I've heard him say he would not buy — that stocks were up too far.

Shakespeare. The cry was sour grapes. He bought the bonds he could not sell,
And had no money left.

Polonius. Then is his fortune near intact. I pray it be enough.

Shakespeare. He's here.

(*Enter Hamlet*)

Hamlet. What would you, Father?
Your call so urgent seemed, I have foregone
Some pressing business elsewhere. On that account, be brief.

Shakespeare. I called you, Hamlet, in the hope your aid
May help recoup the family fortune fading fast
With each new market crash. Your brother Falstaff, myself, Macbeth,
Are on the rocks. You are our single hope.

Hamlet. Then bid good-bye to hope!
The seventh crash before the last I thought that stocks were cheap.
I sold the bonds I held, and doubled up in stocks.
And such a slender grip I hold, one kiss will let me fall.

(*Enter Falstaff*)

Shakespeare. Farewell, a long farewell to all my profits.

(*Enter Macbeth and Lady Macbeth*)

Falstaff. Now here's the whole damned crew,
with all our feathers plucked.

Hamlet. We only lack the mother of the brood.
Where's she?

Shakespeare. She is in bed, thank God.

Hamlet. The pressure of our cause demands
her presence here;
Her aid may save our skin.

Shakespeare. Enough of that! But let me hear
one word
To show our present state, then you are
damned.
Lay off! Some weeks ago I told her that I
sold.

Hamlet. But she will have to know; why fend
the issue off?
If we go down, then she goes too.

Shakespeare. I never thought of that. This
market cracks our brain.

(*Enter Mrs. Shakespeare*)

Mrs. Shakespeare. What do you up so late, my
chicks?
Out forming up a pool, to stave your broker's
call?

Shakespeare. What? You know?

Mrs. Shakespeare. Yes, I know.

Shakespeare. You know, yet there you stand
All silent like the clam. How strange! No sound
of fury

From your tongue, no single word of blame.
Am I grown deaf, or is this but the calm precedes
The terror of the storm?

Mrs. Shakespeare. The germ that bit the world bit me. I, too, am in.

Falstaff. In and all in! O perfect home, your record is sublime!

Shakespeare. Now comes the end of pleasure, the beginning of my work.

Mrs. Shakespeare. Be not alarmed. I sold the market short.

Shakespeare. You! The pillar of our home, model of our life,
Are sunk so low as sell the country short!

Macbeth. To think that you, our mother,
Should be in league with these foul bears, whose rumors vile
Cried down their country's worth, set panic in the land,
Drove down the best of stocks to naked zero's reach,
To hang us all on ruin's limb, gaunt specters of the past!
Here is a tale incredible! The crocodiles will weep!

Hamlet. You idiot dolts! What temper of the mind is this
That you do moralize on things you would have done
Had you but thought you'd win?

Falstaff. The boy is right. These damned philosophers have a use
I never knew could be.

Hamlet. What she has made may cancel all our loss.

Falstaff. Good boy! The point you make blows morals to the winds.
Our Hamlet scores again. Now were he less the fool,
He might be very bright.

Shakespeare. We can forgive her, don't you think?

Mrs. Shakespeare. Forgive? For what? I have not sold the country short,
Nor ever will. The stocks you bought, in like amount I sold.

Lady Macbeth. How have you known, to let you do this?

Mrs. Shakespeare. Lest you forget, my child, you babble in your sleep.

Macbeth. Now do I live again! Lead on, you bulls,
And damned be he who first shall turn a bear!

(*Curtain*)

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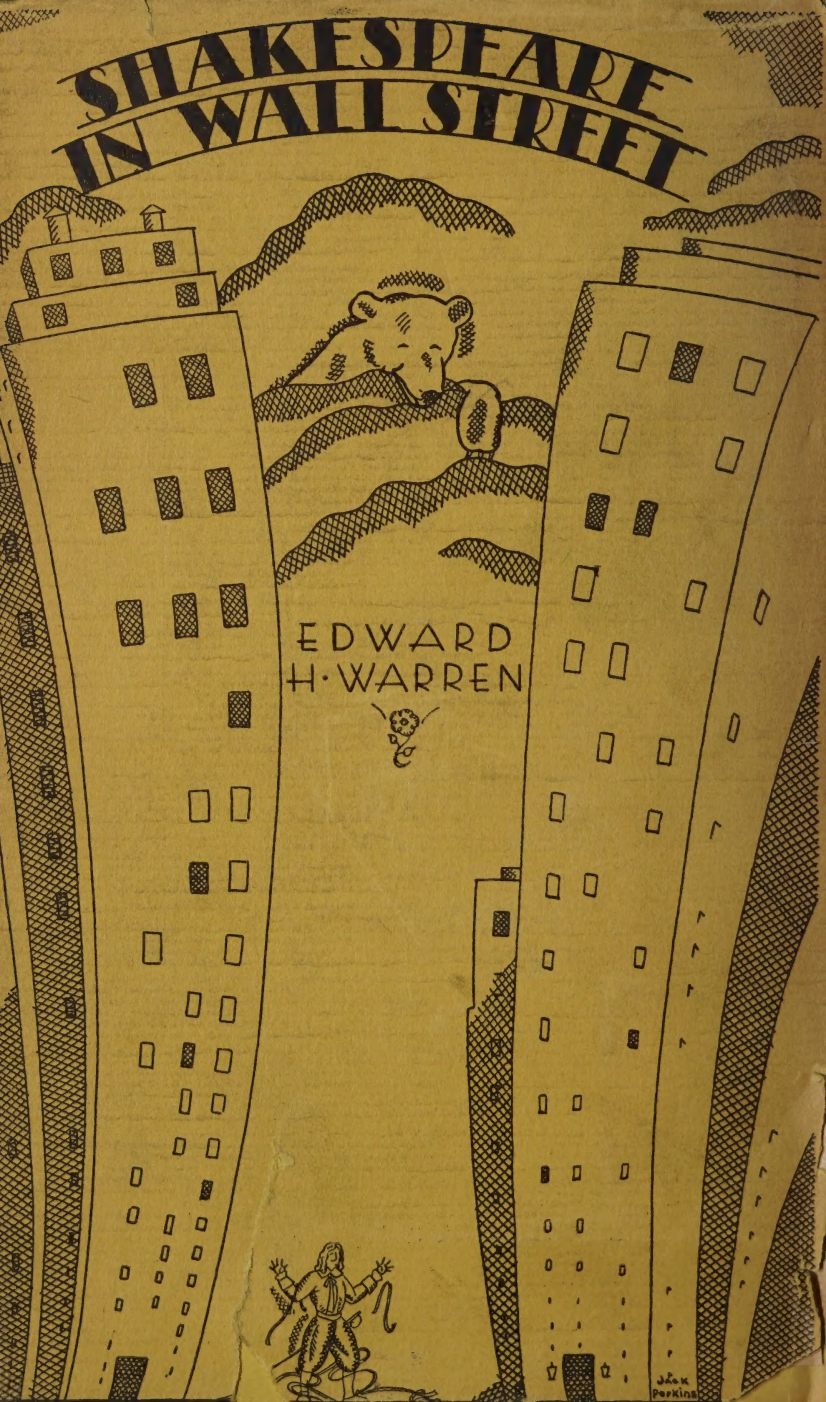
SHAKESPEARE IN WALL STREET



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Jack Perkins